

1500 - TRAVEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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1. Explanation of Material Transmitted: The material transmitted provides information about the Travel Management Centers selected by the NIH and is to be inserted in NIH Manual 1500 as Chapter 11 "Use of NIH Official Travel Management Center". The chapter defines a Travel Management Center (TMC), describes the services and responsibilities of a TMC, outlines performance standards and the corresponding service fees, and highlights travel arranger procedures to be followed.

2. Filing Instructions:

Insert: NIH Manual 1500, Chapter 11 "Use of NIH Official Travel Management Center"

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1500-11-00 - Use of NIH Official Travel Management Center (TMC)

A. Introduction

To assist NIH travelers and delegated travel arrangers, the NIH has awarded a performance-based contract for the provision of travel management services. The Travel Management Center's (TMC) primary role is to offer and support all authorized official NIH travel requirements. The TMC also provides assistance and services for leisure and meeting travel coordination.

NOTE 1: The web site addresses referenced in this chapter are primarily associated with the travel management services provided by the local (in proximity to NIH campus) TMC and are not presently linked to the TMCs in Phoenix, Arizona; Raleigh/Durham, North Carolina; and Frederick, Maryland.

NOTE 2: The policy guidance contained in this chapter applies to all TMCs. In addition, effective January 1, 2001, NIH travelers normally must procure transportation tickets, lodging, and rental car services from the Government contracted Travel Management Center(s) (TMC) in place at the NIH (See NIH Manual 1500-02-01 for additional guidance).

B. Authority

The TMC acts in accordance with established General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) and NIH travel policies and procedures. Appropriate delegations of authority at the National Institutes of Health are those which are published in [NIH Manual Issuance 1130](#) under "**Travel**". These delegations are also defined in NIH Manual Issuance 1500 Chapter 01-02 C(9) and C(10).

C. Definitions

Listed below are some frequently used terms and their definitions related to the procurement of official Government travel.

1. ***Contract Carriers***- U.S. certified air carriers, which are under contract with the Government to furnish Federal employees and other persons authorized to travel at Government expense with passenger transportation services.
2. ***Domestic Travel***- Travel within the continental United States (CONUS), and travel outside the continental United States (OCONUS) which includes the State of Hawaii, the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands and the territories of the United States (i.e., Guam and American Samoa).

3. ***E-Ticket***- A paperless ticketing mechanism whereby a reservation is made with the TMC and instead of receiving a paper ticket with the itinerary, a receipt is provided that includes a "record locator" number. Upon arrival at the airport, only the record locator number and a valid ID along with your Travel Authorization are required to check-in.
4. ***Electronic Booking***- Is an actual method for travelers to independently make reservations directly with an airline via a Personal Computer (PC) while utilizing an electronic booking engine. Commercial examples of this are Microsoft Expedia and Travelocity.
5. ***Employee***- An individual employed by an agency including an individual employed intermittently in the Government service as an expert or consultant and paid on a daily when-actually-employed basis, and an individual serving without pay or at \$1 a year (see FTR 301-1.2).
6. ***Federal Travel Regulation (41 CFR 301) (FTR)***- Governs travel and transportation allowances for Federal civilian employees. This is available on the Internet at <http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/homepage/mtt/mthp.htm>
7. ***Fly America Act***- 49 U.S.C. 40118 requires Federal employees and their dependents, consultants, contractors, grantees, and others performing United States Government- financed foreign air travel to travel by U.S. flag air carrier(s). Details are contained in 41 CFR 301-10.131.
8. ***Foreign Travel***- Official travel that takes place in an area situated both outside the United States and the non-foreign areas (Includes the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands).
9. ***General Services Administration (GSA) City-Pair Program***- As contracted for by GSA scheduled airline passenger service between selected U.S. cities/airports and between selected U.S. and international cities/airports at reduced fares. City-Pair rates can be viewed at <http://www.fedtravel.com/gsa/>. (Click on "Government Contract Flight Schedules").
10. ***Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990***- Public Law 101-391, September 25, 1990. This Act encompasses the guidelines concerning Federal

employees staying in approved public accommodations which have automatic sprinkler systems and smoke detectors while on official Government travel. A current list of places which meet these guidelines can be found on the Internet at <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/hotel>.

11. ***Performance-Based Contracting (PBC)***- This is a contracting method which evolved as part of an overall shift in Government management towards more commercial business practices. Essentially, PBC allows the Government to describe what it wants but not to dictate how the end result should be achieved. By utilizing written performance standards, the Government can measure results to ensure it is getting what was paid for.
12. ***Performance Standard***- An agency-developed tool used to facilitate the assessment of a contractor's performance against the stated contract objectives. Examples of standards which could be monitored include quality, timeliness, and accuracy. Agencies may offer incentives for exceeding a standard, or impose a monetary penalty for nonconformance.
13. ***Service Fee***- A non-refundable service fee is charged by the TMC for all airline or train reservation transactions which result in the issuance of a ticket. If a ticket has been issued and then the trip is canceled, the fee is still owed to the TMC for services rendered. Service fees do not apply to reservations for car rental or hotel accommodations.
14. ***Travel Authorization (Order)***- Written permission to travel on official business. It must include specific purposes, itinerary and estimated costs, and appropriate signatures.
15. ***Travel Management Center (TMC)***- A commercial travel office under contract to GSA or another Federal agency with a centralized location dedicated to providing services and support for all authorized official NIH travel requirements.
16. ***Travel Reimbursement Claim (Voucher)***- A written request, supported by documentation and receipts where applicable, for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of official business, including permanent change of station (PCS) travel.
17. ***Travel Services***- Transportation reservations, issuance and delivery of tickets for all modes;

reservations for hotel/motel and car rental services, or any other related services which support the travel function.

D. TMC Services and Responsibilities

The purpose of the TMC is to provide a high quality, central source of support for authorized travel programs at the NIH. This also includes any changes related to current or emerging administrative or technical products and services which support this objective. The TMC offers an array of core services as described below:

1. Reservation and Ticketing Services

The TMC will provide the NIH with the following reservation and ticketing services:

- Make reservations for Domestic and Foreign travel (airlines, rail, and ship)
- Issue and deliver tickets as specified by requestor
- Information and reservation services for ground transportation
- Itinerary changes
- Refunds i.e., unused E-tickets

2. Agency Travel Policy Compliance

- GSA's Airline City-Pair Program
- Fly America Act
- Lowest available fare
- Premium Class Accommodations

3. Lodging Services

- Lodging services for Federal travelers
- Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990 compliant

4. Car Rental

- Provide lowest rates available to, or negotiated by, the TMC for the NIH.

5. Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

- Arrange necessary and reasonable accommodations, including, but not limited to, airline seating, in-

terminal transfers, ground transportation and accessible lodging.

6. Itineraries/Passenger Receipt Coupons

Automated itinerary documents will be provided, and include such information as:

- Carrier(s)
- Flight or train voyage numbers
- If use of a non-contract flight has been authorized, a standard justification for not using the GSA airline city-pair rate will be noted
- Departure and arrival time for each segment of the trip
- If applicable, the hotel confirmation and other pertinent information
- If applicable, the car reservation confirmation and other pertinent information
- The TMC local, toll-free and emergency after hours phone numbers
- As requested by the NIH, all final itineraries must include all charges associated with the transportation ticket, including the ticket number, price, and applicable service fee(s) charged (based on reservation method used).

7. Ticket Delivery

While electronic ticketing (ticketless) is fast and efficient, it may not be acceptable to the requesting office or available for certain travel destinations. Therefore, the following ticket delivery options are available:

- The NIH Accountable Mail System is a safe and reliable way of receiving tickets. When this option is desired, the NIH requesting office must provide the TMC with a contact name, building, room number, Mail Stop Code, and phone number where the tickets should be delivered.
- The TMC can overnight mail tickets for a fee, or the requestor may provide the TMC with their account number.
- The IC may request to pick-up the tickets at either the off-campus TMC location or in the Building 10, Patient Travel Office.

1500-11-01 TMC Performance Based Contract

A. Features

The TMC will implement and maintain key service features which will enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness for the NIH. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- advanced accounting and reservation systems
- multiple reservation methods (phone, fax and email)
- lowest fare guarantees
- conference and meeting planning services (fee for service)
- multiple enhanced management reports used by the Project Officer in service level and performance evaluations
- upgraded telephone and fax system
- dedicated NIH travelers web site
- emergency back-up and 24 hour customer support
- dedicated VIP/Executive special services desk
- electronic booking in the near future

B. Performance Standards

Performance standards are an important aspect of this contract as they ensure that the NIH customer service needs are met and exceeded. The Project Officer is responsible for reviewing reports and consumer feedback related to each stated performance standard. Armed with this information, the NIH can then partner more effectively with the TMC to more expeditiously resolve any discrepancies or problems by suggesting training and/or changes to established TMC business practices. These performance standards include:

- 98% of all quarterly reservations will be complete and accurate;
- 97% of all quarterly reservations for air travel will have the lowest logical fare based on NIH travel policy and travel requests;
- 85% of all quarterly customer phone calls will be answered within twenty seconds or three rings;
- 90% of all quarterly telephone holding times will average no more than two minutes;
- 90% of all quarterly customer phone messages will be returned within an average of two business hours and,
- 97% of all quarterly requesters/users will rate the vendor at least an average on a written survey (supplied quarterly by TMC with each ticket issued).

If during the quarterly reviews the Project Officer determines that any of these standards have not been met, the TMC will be penalized by reducing the transaction fees paid to the contractor.

C. Service Fees/Booking Methods

A **non-refundable** service fee will be charged for each transaction that involves an airline or train ticket being issued. This includes all travel booked through the TMC (patient, official government, and travel for authorized non-government travelers). These fees are a necessary part of the contract due to the decreasing commissions paid to travel agencies by the airlines. The applicable service fee to be charged by the TMC is dependent upon the type (staff, patient or meeting) and method used to make a reservation. Acceptable methods for making reservations with the NIH TMC are:

Electronic Booking - (presently not available)- This is a method where the travel arranger makes the reservation by utilizing a web based application directly with the travel supplier.

Email/Fax- These are very expedient methods for making reservations. Acceptable forms for fax and email are available at <http://forms.cit.nih.gov/> (Click on "PDF Forms" and then "Travel" for faxing purposes) and <http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/dss/special/travrequest.htm> for email purposes. The TMC will respond back within three business hours of receipt for staff travel requests.

Phone/In-person- These methods are the most time consuming for the travel agents. However, it is possible to call and speak directly with an agent, or go to the TMC off-campus location to make reservations. The Clinical Center patient travel office may not be used for walk-in traffic other than patients.

Service fees are subject to change based on airline commissions paid to travel agencies. For the most current TMC fee schedule please go to <http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/dss/special/travel.htm> (Click on "Contract Information" and then "TMC Fee-for-Service Fact Sheet") .

When a service fee will be charged-

A fee will only be charged when a reservation has been made and a ticket has been issued. It is important to note that no fee will be charged for requesting information through any of these means.

Second service fee for requested changes-

If the traveler requests a change after the ticket has been issued, a second service fee will be charged to issue the new ticket, if applicable.

Time Changes after ticket issuance-

Changing a requested flight departure time will not incur a second service fee as a new ticket is not required.

Where the service fee goes on the travel order-

The applicable service fee should be combined with the ticket price and placed in the Government Travel Account (GTA) field of the travel order.

When a trip is canceled-

If a trip has been canceled after the ticket was issued, the service fee must still be paid. This can be accomplished by zeroing out all costs on the travel order except the service fee (which should remain in the GTA field). Proceed with processing the voucher as usual.

Where the service fee will appear-

The service fee will appear on the ***final itinerary*** which accompanies the ticket (or receipt for e-tickets). For questions or disputes related to a charged fee, you should immediately contact your respective IC Administrative Official.

D. Meeting Travel

The TMC is also able to provide a full range of travel services for authorized non-government personnel on official business for the NIH (Invitational Travel, FTR 300-3.1) through the purchase order and blanket purchase agreement (BPA) mechanisms. Purchasing tickets through either method allows the NIH to take advantage of Government contract airfares. Procedures for processing purchase order and BPA travel can be found at http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/dss/special/po_travel.htm.

NOTE: In accordance with GSA regulations, cost reimbursable contractors are not eligible for contract city-pair fares.

E. Travel Arranger Procedures

To ensure that travel needs are effectively met, we would like to offer some procedures that will assist NIH travel arrangers:

- As soon as travel requirements are known, we suggest that arrangers contact the TMC to begin making reservations. Whenever possible, it is more expedient to email or fax requests using the electronic forms available (See (C) above). These forms contain all the information required to ensure that travel is effectively scheduled.
- The TMC will either fax or email a copy of the requested travel itinerary. Please carefully check this document to ensure that traveler's name, travel dates, times, locations, type of ticket (paper or electronic), delivery information are correct. If

car or hotel reservations were made, ensure that this is confirmed on the itinerary too.

- Approved Travel Orders should be faxed to the TMC within three weeks prior to travel commencing, if the travel is known by that time.
- Travel orders should match the itinerary provided to the TMC (estimated ticket cost, dates, times, locations).
- If a change has been requested, an amended approved Travel Order must be forwarded to the TMC. *(If change was made after a ticket was issued, a second service fee should be included)*
- If a non-contract carrier has been requested, please ensure that a proper justification is provided on the Travel Order.
- If Premium Class Air Accommodations are requested, please ensure that the appropriate form is provided, when applicable (See NIH Manual 1500 Appendix 7 and Appendix 8).
- The non-refundable service fee should be added to the ticket cost and placed in the GTA field found on the Travel Order *(the applicable service fee(s) will be reflected on the final itinerary)*.
- Ensure that the travel agent has been advised as to when, how and where tickets should be delivered. If the NIH accountable mail system is used, provide the appropriate contact name, address and mail stop code (MSC).
- For additional guidance and information on authorization and approval of government travel, please see NIH Manual Issuance 1500-01-00 through 1500-01-02. This information can also be accessed on the web at <http://www3.od.nih.gov/oma/manualchapters>.
- **TMC Contact Information:** For the most current TMC contact information, locations and hours of operation please visit the Office of Research Services (ORS)/Division of Support Services (DSS)/Work Enrichment Programs Branch (WEPB) travel web page at <http://www.nih.gov/od/ors/dss/special/travel.htm>.
- **For any questions or problems related to the TMC, contact the NIH Project Officer:**
- All questions and issues addressed to the Project Officer will be answered promptly. When received, the information will be internally assigned to the appropriate party and tracked until the response or resolution has been prepared and disseminated.

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